

Montana Department of
Public Health & Human Services

Section:

Best Beginnings Quality Child Care Initiatives

CHILD CARE

Subject:

Infant Toddler Certification

Supersedes: Child Care 7-3 (10/1/99)

References: 45 CFR Part 98.51 (b) (2) (ii)

**Background
Information**

The early interactions between an infant and a primary caregiver are instrumental in shaping the child's brain, laying the foundation for future learning and emotional growth. When that relationship changes frequently or is suddenly discontinued, the development of the child's brain is also interrupted. It is vital that infants and toddlers receiving care outside of their homes get high quality care from the same knowledgeable, reliable and nurturing caregiver over an extended period of time.

In 1998 Congress earmarked a portion of the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) for infant/toddler care. States were mandated to implement activities that are designed to increase the supply of quality care for infants and toddlers.

In light of the recent research on infant brain development, Montana's Early Childhood Advisory Council recommended that the first phase of the Montana Infant/Toddler program be focused on developing a high quality training system and certification program for infant/toddler caregivers. This curriculum is approved and available statewide for child care providers and other early care and education practitioners, who wish to become certified infant toddler caregivers.

Infant/toddler care is in high demand across the state. Parents are faced with the difficult task of finding high quality and affordable care for their infants and toddlers in a market where the demand exceeds the supply. Child care providers report that they have a difficult time opening more slots for infants and toddlers because the staff to child ratio is low and the cost to provide care to an infant is high. It is fiscally difficult at best to operate this type of facility.

We have learned through data collected from Montana's I/T Demonstration Project there is a direct correlation between the compensation level for staff and turnover rate and additional funding to programs does make a difference.

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in meeting quality indicators for infants and toddlers.

Montana's Early Childhood Advisory Council recommends that the second phase of the Montana Infant/Toddler program be focused on higher quality of care for as many infants and toddlers as possible in-group settings. With this recommendation the Infant/Toddler Mini Grant Program and the Infant/Toddler stipend program have been developed to allow providers who care or are planning to care for infants and/or toddlers access monies to achieve a higher quality of care and to allow Infant/Toddler certified caregivers to receive higher compensation for caring for infants and/or toddlers.

**Infant/Toddler
Caregiver
Certification**

The state has established an Infant/Toddler Caregiver Certification. In order to be certified as an infant/toddler caregiver, a child care provider must complete at least one of the following training requirements:

- ☐ A current Infant/Toddler CDA
- ☐ A current Family Child Care CDA that includes 30 hours of documented infant/toddler course work
- ☐ The complete, four-module, Program for Infant/Toddler Caregivers (minimum of 60 hours of instruction).
- ☐ Completion of a Child Care Development Specialist Apprenticeship, that includes 30 hours of documented infant/toddler course work.
- ☐ An Associate Degree in Early Childhood/Child Development that includes 30 hours of documented infant/toddler course work.
- ☐ A Bachelors Degree in Early Childhood/Child Development that includes 30 hours of documented infant/toddler instruction.

**Process for
Becoming I/T
certified**

For a provider who becomes a certified infant/toddler caregiver by completing:

- ☐ A current Infant/Toddler CDA
- ☐ A current Family Child Care CDA that includes 30 hours of documented infant/toddler course work
- ☐ An Associate Degree in Early Childhood/Child Development that includes 30 hours of documented infant/toddler course work.

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- ☐ A Bachelors Degree in Early Childhood/Child Development that includes 30 hours of documented infant/toddler instruction.

The provider must notify the Quality Specialist and provide documentation of one of the above. Once this is done the Quality Specialist will check the Infant Toddler certified box on the Montana Person screen in CCUBS. The Quality Specialist will then notify the Contract monitor to send a Montana Certified Infant Toddler Caregiver Certificate and an application for the Infant Toddler Stipend Program to the caregiver.

For a provider who becomes a certified infant/toddler caregiver by completing:

- ☐ The complete, four-module, Program for Infant/Toddler Caregivers (minimum of 60 hours of instruction).

The Infant Toddler instructor will send a class list of participants who successfully complete the above coursework to the Quality Specialist. The Quality Specialist will check the Infant Toddler certified box for each caregiver on the Montana Person screen in CCUBS. The Quality Specialist will then notify the Contract monitor to send a Montana Certified Infant Toddler Caregiver Certificate and an application for the Infant Toddler Stipend Program to each caregiver.

